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THE GENESIS OF ART.

The Origins of Art; a Psychological and Sociological Inquiry. By Yrjö Hirn. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1900.) Price 10s. net.

THE various studies usually grouped under the general term of Anthropology are slowly but surely extending their scope. Not very long ago art was considered to be beyond the realm of science, and its exposition was mainly in the hands of art-critics; but of late years scientific methods have been employed to discover why works of art are created and why they are enjoyed, and to trace the modifications which they have undergone. Those who have paid attention to the subject have recognised, with Bastian, that art is a branch of psychology, and Herbert Spencer and Grosse have also laid stress on the immense importance of art in the evolution of human societies. It is therefore with great pleasure that we welcome an investigation into the origins of art from a psychological and sociological point of view by the learned Finnish savant, Dr. Yrjö Hirn.

Even a casual glance at this clearly and brightly written book will demonstrate that the author has assimilated a mass of information gained from a wide range of reading. A more careful perusal shows that he handles his facts judiciously, and keeps himself well in hand. The deductions are lucidly stated, and the authority for each statement of fact is quoted; the reader has, therefore, every facility for traversing an argument should it not appear at first sight to be valid.

To those who have a fair knowledge of the culture of primitive peoples the book will prove very suggestive, as new light will be thrown upon many well-known facts, and isolated observations will be brought into line.

In the following summary of the main arguments of the book the author's own words have been largely employed, which also will assist towards giving a more complete conception of the work. It is perfectly safe to prophesy that this book will prove of very great value not only to the student at home, but to the investigator in the field.

Despite the generally received dictum of "art for art's sake" it will often be found, especially among primitive folk, that some form of interest, personal, political, ethical or religious, enters into what is regarded as disinterested æsthetic activity. In almost every case where the ornaments of a tribe have been closely examined, it has appeared that what seems to us a mere embellishment is for the natives full of practical, non-æsthetic significance, such as religious symbols, owners' marks, or ideograms, and it is surprising what religious or magical significance lies concealed behind the most apparently trivial of amusements. The dances, poems, and even the formative arts of the lower races possess unquestionable æsthetic value; but this art has generally a utility, and is often even a necessity of life.

The play-theory of Groos, although it unquestionably is explanatory of a great deal, does not account for the origin of the artistic impulse. The aim of play is

attained when the surplus vigour is discharged, or the instinct has had its momentary exercise; but the function of art is not confined to the art of production; something is made and something survives. Excitement and intense delight manifest themselves in movement, dances and songs which rather relieve incipient pain than express pleasure, violent movement acting rather as a regulator by which the organism restores itself to its natural state. By the control of the bodily movements, which form its simplest expression, joy may be diverted into the region of thought.

While supplying man with a means of intensifying all his varied feelings, art at the same time bestows upon him that inward calm in which all strong emotions find their relief. It is very difficult for an individual to resist the contagion of collective feeling, and all strong feelings act as socialising factors. A work of art is the most effective means by which the individual is enabled to convey to wider and wider circles of sympathisers an emotional state similar to that by which he is himself dominated.

Grosse and Wallaschek have emphasised the important part rhythm has played in the struggle for existence by facilitating co-operation, and the contagious power of an idea is vastly increased when it is cast in rhythmical form, whether it be the gymnastic dance, unmelodious music, poetry, or decorative art. Later, owing to more complex emotions, simple gymnastic dancing becomes pantomimic, and the drama is evolved. A histrionic element also manifests itself in other forms of artistic production—for example, literature and the formative and decorative arts of design. With the increased importance of the intellectual elements accompanying the emotional states, direct emotional suggestion appears an inadequate means of communication; and in ornament and music, as well as in painting and novels, there will be found an imitation of nature which serves what, in the widest use of the term, may be called an epic purpose.

In the endeavour to secure the transmission and perpetuation of a feeling, the expressional activity gradually loses its purely impulsive character and becomes transformed into deliberate artistic production which is conscious alike of its aim and of the means for attaining it. The more the work grows in definiteness in the thought and under the hand of the artist, the more it will repress and subdue the chaotic tumult of emotional excitement.

The art impulse, in its broadest sense, must be taken as an outcome of the natural tendency of every state of feeling to manifest itself externally, the effect of such a manifestation being to heighten the pleasure and relieve the pain.

Various other influences have all along been at work which have determined the concrete forms of art. Groos has rightly laid stress on the play-impulse, which has been of incalculable importance in the history of art; but there are also, for example, the impulse to attract by pleasing and the imitative impulse. Dramas may have been composed, pictures painted, or poems made in play, or out of a desire to please, or out of an inborn taste for mimicry.

Among primitive peoples, the dance, the pantomime, and even ornament, have been of great importance as means for the dissemination of information. Although

there is but one step between the impromptu dance or poem which tells of a recent occurrence and the work of art which transmits the memory of that occurrence to posterity, yet it appears that there are savages who have no historical art. On the other hand, the historical art has everywhere reached its highest state of development amongst nations who have had to hold their own against neighbouring tribes.

Before discussing the problems of art and sexual selection, of the origin of self-decoration and of erotic art, the author devotes a chapter to a consideration of animal display, and his treatment of the subject is worthy of the attention of zoologists. He arrives at the conclusion that human sexual selection did not create any quality of beauty and that human decoration, like that of animals, is mainly an advertisement of likeness of kind ; but, strange as it may appear, scarcely any form of dress or ornament can be quoted which could be considered with certainty an outcome of the impulse to attract or charm the opposite sex. Decorations of various kinds are conferred on young people on attaining puberty, and indicate a new social status, and various subsequent advances in rank have their appropriate decoration. The impulse to ostentation with regard to rank, valour or wealth is undeniably independent of sexual selection. Even where there is no competition between rivals, sexual emotions may still find an artistic expression. Like the courting display of many birds, men may have resorted to song and dance as a mode of overcoming the instinctive coyness of the female after sexual selection has operated ; but the strong emotional tension of such periods must in any case seek relief by sound or movement.

It is evident that a pantomimic imitation of any activity must, as exercise and stimulation, facilitate the subsequent real execution of the same activity. Individuals and nations who have grown familiar in play with the most important actions in life's work have thus acquired an unquestionable advantage in the struggle for existence. This holds good alike for the everyday occupations of life as for war. Music and song have especially been useful stimuli to work, partly to overcome natural laziness or inertia, partly to effect unison in the actions of several workers ; for instance, the regularity of the action of many peoples is explicable as a result of the rhythmical songs by which their work is accompanied. This applies with equal force to war ; hence it is not surprising to find highly developed choral dances in those peoples in whose life war is a customary occurrence. The need of stimulation is never so great as when a man has to risk his life in an open battle, and with this end in view the military singers of some tribes are able to work themselves and their audience up to a pitch of frenzy which is almost equal to that produced by the dances. Courage is also induced by the effort to appear formidable and courageous. Instruction in grimacing even formed a part of the military education of the Maoris. Hence, too, the frightful decorations which so many peoples employ when going on the warpath and the well-known face-shields of some of the tribes of New Guinea and Borneo. The decorative art of warlike peoples is usually characterised by a vigour and originality which dominate also their poetry and dramatic dances, and which are

the outcome of an intense and forcible life ; but descriptive and figurative art, in the sense of realistic, faithful rendering of nature and life, has never attained any high development among the most military tribes.

Sympathetic magic which is based upon a likeness between things calls forth imitations of nature and life which, although essentially non-aesthetic in their intention, may nevertheless be of importance for the historical evolution of art. Nor is this confined to the primitive or decorative arts. There are many magical dances and pantomimes, and there is an universal belief in the efficacy of incantations and in magical songs and poems.

Every man seeks automatically to heighten his feelings of pleasure and to relieve his feelings of pain. The artist is the man who finds that he can gain such enhancement or relief, not only by the direct action of giving expression to his feeling, but also by arousing a kindred feeling in others. Hence originates in him that desire to transmit his moods to an external audience, and there also arises the endeavour to give the artistic product a form which may facilitate the revival of the original state in an ever-widening circle of sympathisers.

" Beyond the fact that art has been obliged to avail itself of media which have originally been called into existence by utilitarian, non-aesthetic needs, there lies another fact. To these external 'origins' we can also trace some of the most important qualities which we appreciate in a work of art. In this way it is open to us to explain how several of the virtues of art, as we know it, may be derived from the primitive needs which it subserved ; how, for instance, the lucidity of art may find its explanation in art's use for conveying information ; how the sensuous and attractive qualities of all art may be traced to the need for propitiating favour ; how the power that resides in art to trace and stimulate the mind may be transmitted from the days when the artist was appointed to nerve his fellows for work or war. And, lastly, it might be argued that a most characteristic quality of art—the imagination—which is in a sense faith in the reality of the unreal, may have been immensely heightened by the use of art for purposes of magic, which fuses the visible and the invisible."

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THE PARTIAL DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS OF MODERN MATHEMATICAL PHYSICS.

Die Partiellen Differentialgleichungen der mathematischen Physik. Nach Riemann's Vorlesungen. Fourth edition. Revised and rewritten by Heinrich Weber. Vol. i. Pp. xvii + 506. (Brunswick : Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 1900.)

THE lectures, delivered at the University of Göttingen by Prof. Bernard Riemann in the sessions of 1854-55, of 1860-61 and in the summer of 1862, have, thanks to the volume brought out after Riemann's death under the editorship of Karl Hattendorff, long ranked among the mathematical classics. The third and last edition of "Partielle Differentialgleichungen" appeared in 1882, and two years ago Prof. Heinrich Weber was entrusted with the task of bringing out a fourth